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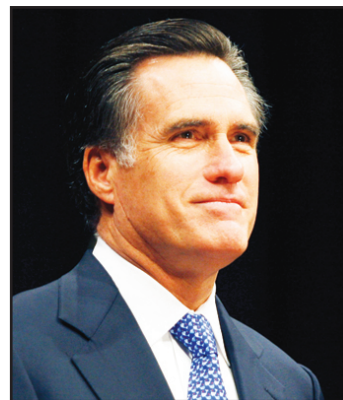
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Poll boost for Romney ahead of crucial Iowa vote

NORTH LIBERTY (AFP) - Mitt Romney has seized the lead in Iowa days before the unpredictable heartland state's caucus kicks off voting to decide the Republican presidential nominee, a new poll showed Wednesday.

The CNN/Time/ORC survey also confirmed the 64-year-old former Massachusetts governor's dominance in New Hampshire, the second state to vote, boosting his chances of a possible fast-track romp to the nomination.

"This is going to be so much fun! Why don't we just cause right now?" an upbeat



Poll boost for Romney ahead of crucial Iowa vote

Romney told a cheering crowd of some 500 people packed into the warehouse space of a top plastic parts manufacturer.

Taking aim at President Barack Obama's greatest political liability, Romney charged the embattled Democrat "doesn't get" how to unleash the private sector to revive the sour US economy and lower historically high joblessness.

He also accused Obama of trying to build an "entitlement society" that would only "create poverty," charging his approach would make the United States more like debt crisis-hit European nations Greece and Italy.

"I don't want it to become like Europe, I don't want big government, with bigger and bigger taxes, and bigger and bigger debt, overwhelming our people," said the millionaire former venture capitalist.

Iowa Democratic Party Chair Sue Dvorsky blasted Romney, charging that "if Iowa's middle-class families had a real chance to kick the tires and check under the hood, they would see a 17-year political career of waffling on the issues and decisions that have left the middle class behind."

Romney -- often described as the candidate to beat because of his campaign warchest and high-profile endorsements -- has struggled to boost his national support past roughly 25 percent of Republican voters.

And the survey gave a fresh sign that the nomination battle remained highly volatile, as fiercely conservative former senator Rick Santorum tripled his showing from similar polls one month ago with 16 percent, making him third.

"I like Santorum, I like him a lot. I feel he's honest and straightforward. But I feel like his lack of experience in the private sector is what draws me more to Romney than to him," Heidi Eliason, 30, told AFP at the Romney rally.

Romney, who was reluctant to make a big play for Iowa this time around after gambling big here in 2008 but losing out to Mike Huckabee, now finds himself in pole position as his main rival Newt Gingrich falters.

Continue on pg 3

Only in Aruba...



Animal lovers need not be alarmed if you spot an SUV on the road with an unusual roof ornament; Buddy, a shepard/pit bull mix with a sweet and friendly nature, loves to take in the sights and feel the breeze on his face while his master Vader makes his way around Aruba. "He just sort of started doing it on his own, so I let him," explains Vader. So far, Buddy is flying high with no mishaps, as well as proven to be a favorite conversation starter with island visitors and a stalwart assistant guide on Vader's outback tours, as he is obviously quite sure-footed!

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Again a precious life is lost

By: Roland W. Peterson

*Again someone drowned
at one of our beaches.*

Again it is Baby Beach.

*Again there are questions
asked.*

*Again it is: How is this
possible?*

*Again it is asked: Were
there no life guards present?*

*Again why is there still no
sign stating that "Swimming
is at own risk. No lifeguard
present"*

*Again concerned citizens
are asking, Why? Why?
Why?*

*Why is Baby Beach claim-
ing drowning/lives?*



First of all I do not pretend to be an expert on this field. But as a concerned citizen I am entitled to have my own opinion and an equal right to voice my opinion. But if you feel that you can do better, what is taking you so long? Whenever I have critique I try to come with a solution.

Baby Beach is a very calm and shallow lagoon on the south/east end of the island. It has two inlets/channels, to which I will refer to as the upper and lower channels. Baby Beach is protected by a reef on the south side. The upper channel is the smallest of the two and is the one fur-

thest to the east. Outside the reef there is one of Aruba's most beautiful diving/snorkeling areas.

In the lagoon the water is so shallow you can walk to the middle of the lagoon and the water will be waist high. The water is so shallow, you would imagine that babies swim here (most likely) hence the name Baby Beach.

How is it possible that people still drown at this lagoon.

To answer this question (scientifically) I would have to make a lengthy survey, so for now I will limit myself to

some observations I made personally.

Sitting on the beach I observed the people who were making use of the lagoon.

I noticed that there were several elderly persons and persons who had some difficulty walking, entering the water. Most of them were helped into the water by someone else. There were some others who you could clearly see, that they could not swim.

Anyhow I got the impression that they were lured to the water by its calmness and its "shallowness".

The name says it: "Baby Beach", assuming that even babies swim there, so why not me?

As I sat there I observed that these elderly persons and the "not swimmers", all had one thing in common: they all wanted to reach the middle of the lagoon. Jumping and floundering they made it, but every time they made a little misstep on the uneven sandy bottom, they would sink to their shoulders in the water. Frantically they would gasp for breath and then look around to see if someone no-

ticed that they were "pulled under" by Moby Dick.

But that is not all, now they all jump and flounder to the upper channel. There they would join some other "Jacques Costeau" tourists feeding the fish in the channel entrance.

Somehow by holding on to others, jumping, floundering and struggling they make it back to the beach.

And so it goes on, one after the other.

Before me, the "observer" could catch my breath and wipe some sweat off my forehead, there goes another adventurous couple to the middle of the lagoon.

After several observations I came to the following conclusions.

Baby Beach is a very shallow calm lagoon. It hardly has any under current. The average swimmer would not have any problem swimming at Baby Beach.

But Baby Beach is not only visited by average swimmers.

Baby Beach is daily visited by the elderly and often by people who can "hardly" swim.

It seems that these people have heard about Baby Beach and its calm and shallow water. So they figure, that is the place for me.

Imagine it is called Baby Beach, so I could go there too.

Lured by the calm shallow water, they all venture to swim (flounder) to the middle of the lagoon or to the channel opening. This channel-opening has some suction (under current) that can pull you out of the lagoon. If you fight against this suction you will get panicky and tired. It is better to go along with the suction until you are pushed up on the reef further down (direction lower channel) There you can yell for help. But this is something you have to know. If no one explains this to you, then you may be up to some trouble if you are not a good swimmer. So before the "elderly" and the "not (so good) swimmers" enter the water, explain this situation to them. It will save a precious life.

The slightest misstep and they become panicky and when there is no professional help at hand things go unfortunately wrong.

So if you know that the elderly visit a certain place, then you should be prepared to standby with medical help. Most elderly are prone to medical problems and if you are going to cater to them, make sure that you have a medical response team at hand.

In the case of Baby Beach there should be from sunrise to sunset, every day, a life guard and an equipped medical first aid team on the beach.

We cannot and should not market our world known pristine beaches and crystal clear water, with no life guard present.



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Poll boost for Romney ahead of crucial Iowa vote

Continued from pg 1

If he can take Iowa on January 3 and go on to claim an expected victory in New Hampshire a week later, it is hard to see anyone catching him despite lingering doubts among many Republicans about his conservative credentials.

The CNN/Time/ORC poll showed Romney in front in Iowa with 25 percent, narrowly ahead of Ron Paul on 22 percent. Romney's three-point margin was within the sampling error and the poll surveyed only 452 people.

Paul, a veteran Texas congressman, has a loyal following in Iowa but his libertarian views are firmly outside Republican orthodoxy and it is seen as highly unlikely that

he could win the eventual nomination.

Gingrich, who enjoyed a clear lead in Iowa a few weeks ago after an unexpected popularity surge, polling as high as 33 percent, has lost ground dramatically after a barrage of negative advertising from his rivals.

The latest poll placed him fourth on 14 percent and showed him slipping behind Santorum, a former Pennsylvania senator whose boom is likely to excite his fervent evangelical supporters.

Lacking the major funding of more monied rivals, Santorum has gone door-to-door in Iowa, pitching himself to socially conservative voters

in a time-honored fashion that has paid dividends for past candidates.

"We're going up in the morning doing radio shows at six in the morning and going until nine, ten at night and town meeting after town meeting -- 357 in Iowa. Hard work pays off," Santorum told CNN.

"We don't need someone who can just be a little better" than embattled Democratic President Barack Obama, the long-shot candidate urged two dozen people at a morning event in this town's city hall. "Do not settle."

But Santorum noted that the sour economy and stubbornly high unemployment dominate the national politi-

cal landscape ahead of the November 2012 elections, and that the party must win over working-class voters who might side with Obama.

"Bread and butter is bread and butter, and we'd better have a message that attracts all across the board," said the former US senator, whose home state of Pennsylvania is expected to be a critical battleground state.

Still, with not quite half of Iowans telling pollsters that their minds are not made up, and Romney struggling to push his support above roughly 25 percent here and nationwide, the race could still swing in unexpected ways.

"We'll surprise a lot of

people," Santorum, who needs a strong showing in Iowa to stay in contention through New Hampshire's January 10 primary and beyond, said as he sipped a decaffeinated "Cold War Latte" from an area coffee shop.

A second CNN/Time/ORC poll indicated that Romney was still the overwhelming favorite to win New Hampshire, where he had the backing of 44 percent of likely Republican voters, up nine points from earlier this month.

Paul was second on 17 percent, while Gingrich had plummeted 10 percentage points since early December and was languishing in third on 16 percent.



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'Idol' Clarkson backs Ron Paul, stirs Twitter tempest



WASHINGTON (AFP) - Chart-topping pop star Kelly Clarkson has stirred up a political tempest on her Twitter feed after endorsing Ron Paul for the Republican presidential nomination ahead of the Iowa caucuses.

"I love Ron Paul. I liked him a lot during the last republican nomination and no one gave him a chance," tweeted the 29-year-old "American Idol" winner (@kelly_clarkson) who, like 76-year-old congressman Paul, hails from Texas.

"If he wins the nomination for the Republican party in 2012 he's got my vote," she added. "Too bad he probably won't."

Several fans responded by

reminding Clarkson of Paul's social-conservative views, with some going so far as to brand the libertarian as a racist and homophobe -- and others tweeting he was not.

"I'm flabbergasted that an artist with such a huge gay fan base would publicly support Ron Paul," wrote Myranda Warden, or @my_warden, in one typical riposte. "Why, @kelly_clarkson, why?!"

"I am really sorry if I have offended anyone," answered Clarkson, whose first single off her recently-released fifth album "Stronger" is titled "Mr. Know It All."

"I do not support racism. I support gay rights, straight rights, women's rights, men's rights, white/black/purple/orange rights," she added.

"I like Ron Paul because he believes in less government and letting the people (all of us) make the decisions and mold our country. That is all. Out of all of the Republican nominees, he's my favorite."



Strictly unusual: offbeat stories from 2011

- The bad news for a group of employees in a Canadian technology company was that the firm was closing down and laying them off. The good news, received the same day, was that 10 of them had jointly won the equivalent of 7.1 million dollars in the state lottery.

*

- A woman in Sicily who had put off paying a three-year-old parking fine got a shock when she opened a letter telling her it had shot up to 32,000 euros, including interest. An absent-minded official had typed in the date of the violation as '208', rather than '2008', and the computer had done the rest.

*

-- A poverty-stricken 75-year-old woman in the Caucasian republic of Georgia cut off all Internet access in both her home country and neighbouring Armenia when she inadvertently sliced through a cable while foraging for scrap metal.

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India's new anti-graft law fails to pass in parliament

NEW DELHI (AFP) - India's government and ruling Congress party failed to pass its proposed flagship anti-corruption law on Thursday as the legislation stalled in the upper house of parliament amid fierce opposition.

The draft law to create a new ombudsman tasked with investigating public officials was approved by the lower house of parliament on Tuesday, but faced an uphill task to clear the upper chamber.

Congress, which does not have a majority in the Rajya Sabha, lobbied furiously behind the scenes, but was ultimately unable to unite its coalition partners, particularly its unreliable regional ally the Trinamool Congress.

The 243-member upper house adjourned at midnight

amid scenes of shouting and disorder after 14 hours of debate -- an ignominious end to an extended session of parliament called especially to pass the legislation.

The future of the bill is now uncertain, but will most likely have to be revised and again presented to lawmakers.

But Thursday's failure to pass it deals a bitter blow to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's administration, which had to withdraw another major reform earlier this month allowing foreign supermarkets to operate in India.

"We are trying to our best to get the bill passed," claimed Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pawan Bansal in the final minutes of the debate, shortly before the speaker called an end to proceedings.



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Iran-US brinkmanship over oil strait worsens

TEHRAN (AFP) -- A showdown between Iran and the United States over Tehran's threats to close the strategic Strait of Hormuz to oil tankers worsened Thursday with warships from each side giving weight to an increasingly bellicose exchange of words.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards rejected a warning that the US military would "not tolerate" such a closure, saying they would act decisively "to protect our vital interests."

The tough language came as two US warships entered a zone where the Iranian navy's ships and aircraft were in the middle of 10 days of war games designed as a show of military might.

But a US navy spokeswoman said later that the aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis and the guided-mis-

sile cruiser USS Mobile Bay had transited without incident on Tuesday, in pre-planned, routine operation.

"Our interaction with the regular Iranian Navy continues to be within the standards of maritime practice, well-known, routine and professional," Fifth Fleet spokeswoman Lieutenant Rebecca Rebarich said on Thursday.

The transit area was in waters east of the Strait of Hormuz, a choke point at the entrance to the Gulf through which more than a third of the world's tanker-borne oil passes.

Iranian Vice President Mohammad Reza Rahimi warned this week that "not a drop of oil will pass through the Strait of Hormuz" if the West followed through with planned additional sanctions against Iran over its nuclear programme.

The navy commander,

Admiral Habibollah Sayari, backed that up by saying it would be "really easy" to close the strait.

A US Defence Department spokesman riposted Wednesday that "interference with the transit... of vessels through the Strait of Hormuz will not be tolerated."

But Brigadier General Hossein Salami, the deputy commander of Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guards, told Fars news agency on Thursday that "our response to threats is threats."

"We have no doubt about our being able to carry out defensive strategies to protect our vital interests -- we will act more decisively than ever," he was quoted as saying.

"The Americans are not qualified to give us permission" to carry out military strategy, he said.

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TUESDAY AND FRIDAY: LIVE MUSIC

International News

N. Korea acclaims new supreme leader at huge parade



North Korea's new supreme leader Kim Jong-Un, youngest son of the late Kim Jong-Il

SEOUL (AFP) - Korea on Thursday staged a massive memorial service for Kim Jong-Il to end almost two weeks of official mourning,

and formally declared his untested young son Jong-Un as the new supreme leader.

Addressing tens of thousands of troops and civilians packing a wintry Pyongyang square, ceremonial head of state Kim Yong-Nam praised the late leader for contributing to "global peace and stability of the 21st century".

Kim Jong-Un, "the supreme leader of our party and army and people", had inherited his late father's spirit, leadership, personality, morality and fortitude, he added.

A sombre Jong-Un, clad in a black overcoat, presided from a balcony over the ceremony along with other members of the regime.

The service in Kim Il-Sung Square, named after the communist country's founder and

father of the late Kim, concluded the mourning following Kim Jong-Il's death on December 17 from a heart attack at the age of 69.

Analysts said the vast assembly was a show of confidence in Jong-Un, who inherits a daunting in-tray -- severe food shortages, a crumbling economy, acute power shortages and a nuclear programme which has alienated the West.

UN agencies have said six million people -- a quarter of the population -- urgently need food aid.

Whatever its internal difficulties, the North Korean regime presented a proud face to the outside world at the Pyongyang rally and further polished the cult of personality surrounding the Kim dynasty.

Attack on hotel in northeast Nigeria wounds 15

KANO (AFP) - Gunmen threw explosives at a hotel and open-air bar in northeastern Nigeria, wounding 15 people, an employee and police said Thursday, the latest in a spate of attacks blamed on Islamists.

The attack in the city of Gombe on Wednesday night follows a series of bombings on Christmas Day blamed on the Islamist group Boko Haram which killed at least 40 people and sparked fears of renewed sectarian violence.

"The gunmen came and an argument ensued between them and the security guards at the entrance," said Ojeifo Nelson, manager of the Tumfure Resort in Gombe, who added that he was among those wounded with a leg injury.

"They made their way to the reception and threw explosives into the reception and fired shots into the garden. Fifteen people in all were injured but none of the injuries is life-threatening."

A police spokesman confirmed the incident to reporters but did not provide details. The motive for the attack was not clear.

Nigeria's northeast has been hit by scores of bomb blasts and shootings blamed on Boko Haram, which has targeted bars on numerous occasions.

The Islamist group also claimed responsibility for Christmas Day bombings that killed 40 people in several towns -- the deadliest an explosion outside a Catholic church near the capital Abuja.

Amid fears of reprisal attacks by Christians, attackers on Tuesday threw a bomb into an Arabic school in Nigeria's mainly Christian southern town of Sapele, wounding six children and an adult.

Violence had been raging even in the days before the Christmas Day bombings, especially in the northeastern cities of Damaturu, Potiskum and Maiduguri. Most of the incidents attributed to Boko Haram have occurred in the northeast.

Nigeria is Africa's most populous nation with 160 million people, roughly divided between a mainly Muslim north and predominantly Christian south.

BBC in hot water over 'pandagate' sexism row

LONDON (AFP) - It was intended as a lighthearted addition to an otherwise serious list of women who made the headlines in 2011. But the BBC's inclusion of a panda in its "faces of the year" has kicked up a storm.

In a media row dubbed "Pandagate" by users of Twitter, the broadcaster has included Tian Tian (Sweetie),

one of two pandas who arrived at a Scottish zoo earlier this month, as its female "face" for December in an online feature.

The hairy giant is named alongside women such as US Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, who survived being shot in the head during a meeting with voters, Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff and Kate Middleton's sister Pippa.

Opposition Labour lawmaker Stella Creasy was among those who criticised the BBC's decision, saying that despite its light-hearted tone, the list caused concern because it appeared to be part of a trend.

Last month, the BBC came under fire for failing to include any women in the 10-strong shortlist for its prestigious Sports Personality of the Year award.

BBC couldn't think of 12 human female faces who have made the news this year."

The BBC said this was not the first time an animal had made the list.

"In 2009, Benson the Carp, a much-caught giant fish, was August's entry on the male list and last year Peppa the Pig (a popular cartoon character) was on the female list for April."

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International News

Egypt police raid NGOs in foreign funds probe

CAIRO (AFP) - Egyptian police raided more than a dozen offices belonging to local and foreign rights groups on

Thursday, as part of an investigation into alleged illicit foreign funding, an official statement said.

At least two US rights groups -- the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) -- were targeted in the operation, judicial sources said.

The raids, in which no arrests were reported, came as the authorities blamed foreign-funded groups for political unrest in the country after an uprising ousted president Hosni Mubarak in February.

The Washington-based IRI said it was "dismayed and disappointed by these actions."

"IRI has been working with Egyptians since 2005; it is ironic that even during the Mubarak era IRI was not subjected to such aggressive action," it said.

Police special forces blocked the entrance to the NDI offices in a Cairo villa as men in plain clothes, some of them members of the prosecution service, carried out computers and boxes full of files, an AFP correspondent said.

Witnesses told AFP that police had also closed off the IRI's office and were confiscating its equipment.

The state prosecutor's office said in a statement that a team of investigators from the prosecution service was searching "17 headquarters of branches of Egyptian and foreign civil society groups."

They were carrying out an order from judges the justice ministry had tasked with investigating the groups' foreign funding, after obtaining "serious evidence of their engaging in illegal activities," the statement said.

The groups allegedly did not obtain licences to operate or permission from the foreign and social solidarity ministries, the statement added.

Turkish air strike kills 35 Kurds in apparent 'blunder'



ORTASU: Locals gather in front of a truck carrying the bodies of people who were killed in a warplane attack in the Ortasu village of Uludere, in the Sirnak province, on December 29, 2011.

ULUDERE (AFP) - Turkish fighter jets killed 35 Kurds in an air strike the country's ruling party admitted Thursday could have been a "blunder" that mistakenly hit civilians instead of Kurdish separatists.

Turkey's military command said it had launched an air raid on Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants after a spy drone spotted a group moving toward its sensitive southeastern border under cover of darkness late Wednesday.

"According to initial reports, these people were smugglers and not terrorists," said Huseyin Celik, vice-president of the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP).

"If it turns out to have been a mistake, a blunder, rest assured that this will not be covered up," he told reporters in Ankara on Thursday, adding that it could have been an "operational accident" by the military.

"In the name of my party I would like to express our shock and sadness," he said, while calling on the public to await the results of an investigation.

It would be one of the deadliest incidents involving civil-

ians in the long-running Kurdish separatist conflict in Turkey.

The country's main pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BPD) said the planes had bombed villagers from Kurdish majority southeastern Turkey who were smuggling sugar and fuel across the border on mules and donkeys.

"It's clearly a massacre of civilians, of whom the oldest is 20," BDP leader Selahattin Demirtas said in a statement that called on Turkey's Kurdish population to respond "by democratic means."

In Istanbul, hundreds of masked demonstrators clashed with police in the city's main Taksim Square during a protest over the air strike called for by the BDP.

The demonstration, attended by about 2,000 people, turned violent when several hundred youths shouted slogans in support of the PKK and threw stones at riot police, who responded with water cannon and tear gas, making several arrests.

Clashes between Kurdish rebels and the army have escalated in recent months.



Aruban Bankers Association

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Latest China food safety scandal widens to oil



A sidewalk chef stir-fries vegetables in his blazing wok in Beijing.

BEIJING (AFP) - Chinese authorities have recalled cooking oil products made by three companies after finding they contained the same type of cancer-causing toxin recently found in milk, state media said Thursday.

A product safety watchdog in the southern province of Guangdong suspended operations at plants owned by the firms, which made oil containing excessive levels of aflatoxin, caused by mould, the Xinhua news agency said.

The incident comes after leading dairy firm Mengniu revealed at the weekend that authorities found high levels of aflatoxin in a batch of milk before it was sold, caused by

cows eating mouldy feed at a farm in southwest China.

Aflatoxins, which affect grains and other agricultural products, can increase the risk of cancer, including liver cancer, according to the World Health Organisation.

The oil was made from peanuts, Xinhua said, naming the producers as Fusheng Oil, Manyi Peanut Oil and Mabao Oil.

It was not known if any of the tainted oil had reached consumers, it added.

Chinese state media and netizens, meanwhile, have blasted Mengniu as consumers voice anger over yet another food safety scandal to hit the country, despite repeated

crackdowns on product safety violations.

In an editorial Thursday, the state-run China Daily newspaper called on Mengniu to improve quality, saying the reputation of the entire dairy industry was at stake.

"Consumers' tolerance of food safety issues is wearing ever more thin and Mengniu's reputation is unlikely to survive another scandal," it said.

Milk was at the centre of one of China's biggest food safety scandals in 2008 when the industrial chemical melamine was found to have been illegally added to dairy products to give the appearance of higher protein content.

At least six babies died and another 300,000 became ill after drinking milk tainted with the chemical.

Mengniu and several other companies were implicated, and the government at the time vowed to better regulate the dairy industry.

Elderly who eat better stay mentally sharp: study

(AFP) - Elderly people with higher levels of certain vitamins and omega 3 fatty acids in their blood score better on mental acuity tests than those who eat junk food, a new study has shown.

The study published in *Neurology*, the journal of the American Academy of Neurology, also showed that eating better could help reduce the brain shrinkage commonly associated with Alzheimer's disease.

"This approach clearly shows the biological and neurological activity that's associated with actual nutrient levels, both good and bad," said Maret Traber, a principal investigator at the Linus Pauling Institute and study co-author.

Researchers at the institute at Oregon State University conducted the study, one of the first of its kind, along with scientists at the Oregon Health and Science University in Portland.

The study, carried out among 104 people at an average age of 87, specifically measured a wide range of blood nutrient levels instead of basing results on food questionnaires, which are less precise and less reliable.

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range of fruits, vegetables and fish can be measured in blood biomarkers," Traber said.

"I'm a firm believer these nutrients have strong potential to protect your brain and make it work better."

Researchers noted the positive effects of high levels of vitamins B, C, D and E, as well as the healthy oils most commonly found in fish, on mental quickness and brain size.

Those with a higher intake of trans-fats -- commonly found in fried foods, fast foods and other less healthy diet options -- did not perform as well on cognitive tests.

Researchers found that while age and education affected performance on the cognitive tests, nutrient status accounted for 17 percent of the variation in scores, and 37 percent of the differences in brain volume.

Of those who took part in the study, seven percent showed a vitamin B12 deficiency, and 25 percent did not have enough vitamin D in their systems.

Scientists tested 30 different nutrient biomarkers. In addition, 42 participants had MRI scans to measure their brain volume.

"These findings are based on average people eating average American diets," Traber said. "If anyone right now is considering a New Year's resolution to improve their diet, this would certainly give them another reason to eat more fruits and vegetables."

Study co-author Gene Bowman of the Oregon Health and Science University added while results needed to be confirmed, "it is very exciting to think that people could potentially stop their brains from shrinking and keep them sharp by adjusting their diet."

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Sci-Tech

Rio gears up for 'green' fireworks



Fireworks on Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on New Year's Day 2010.

BRASILIA (AFP) - This year's New Year's Eve fireworks on Rio's famed Copacabana beach, an event expected to draw nearly two million party-goers, will have an environmental theme, officials said this week.

"We are very proud to or-

ganize the world's biggest 'Reveillon' show, the liveliest and the most peaceful," said Mayor Eduardo Paes. "We are going to have once more a super event with beautiful, spectacular and fantastic fireworks for all tastes."

Press reports said the elab-

flora and fauna as well as the wind and optimism.

The celebration, in which nearly 24 tons of fireworks will be detonated for 16 minutes from midnight on January 1, will also feature a laser show and music by DJ Joao Brasil.

Attendees were expected to come clad all in white to the event, which calls attention to the importance of protecting the environment and to ways people can contribute to building a better planet for future generations.

It is planned as part of the lead-up to Rio+20, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development scheduled to take place in the Brazilian city in June.

Some 1,500 policemen will provide security for the Copacabana extravaganza, the biggest of 10 such events across the city.

'Record ivory seizures' in 2011



Officers from the Kenya's Revenue Authority and Kenya Wildlife Services stand over elephant tusks seized at the Kenyan port of Mombasa on December 22, 2011.

NAIROBI (AFP) - The past 12 months have seen a record number of large ivory seizures across the world, a leading wildlife watchdog said Thursday, saying it had been a "horrible year for elephants".

TRAFFIC, which runs the ETIS database of illegal ivory trades, said there had been at least 13 large-scale seizures in 2011, totalling at least 23 tonnes of ivory -- representing about 2,500 elephants.

This compares to just six large seizures in 2010, weighing a total of just under 10 tonnes, and confirms a sharp rise in the trade evident since 2007.

"In 23 years of compiling ivory seizure data for ETIS, this is the worst year ever for large ivory seizures -- 2011 has truly been a horrible year for elephants," said Tom Milliken, TRAFFIC's elephant expert.

The watchdog warned that once the details of hundreds of smaller ivory seizures were collated, "2011 could well prove to be the worst year ever for elephants" since the ETIS database was set up in 1989.

Most illegal shipments of

African elephant ivory end up in either China, where it is ground up and used in traditional medicine, or in Thailand, the watchdog said, with Malaysia the most frequent transit country.

Milliken said the increasing quantities of ivory being traded, many of them from either Kenyan or Tanzanian ports, reflected a rising demand in Asia as well as the increased sophistication of the criminal gangs who sell it.

They constantly change their routes to Asia to avoid detection, including switching from air to sea freight, and once the ivory products arrive, their documentation is amended to conceal the fact that they came from Africa.

"As most large-scale ivory seizures fail to result in any arrests, I fear the criminals are winning," Milliken said.

International trade in elephant ivory was banned in 1990, and ETIS (the Elephant Trade Information System) holds the details of more than 17,000 reported ivory and other elephant product seizures across the world since then.

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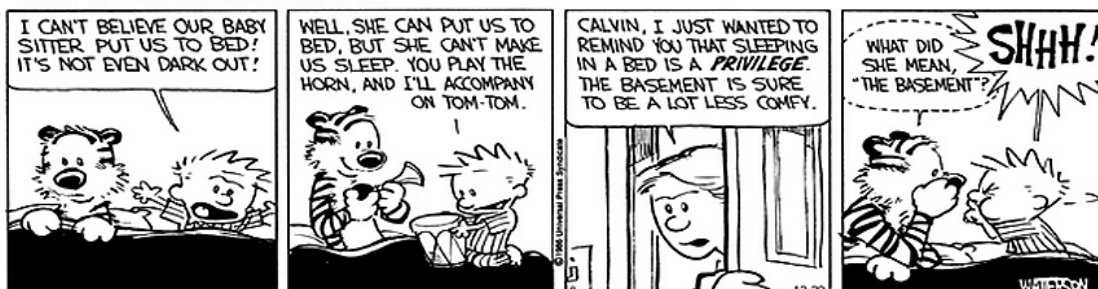
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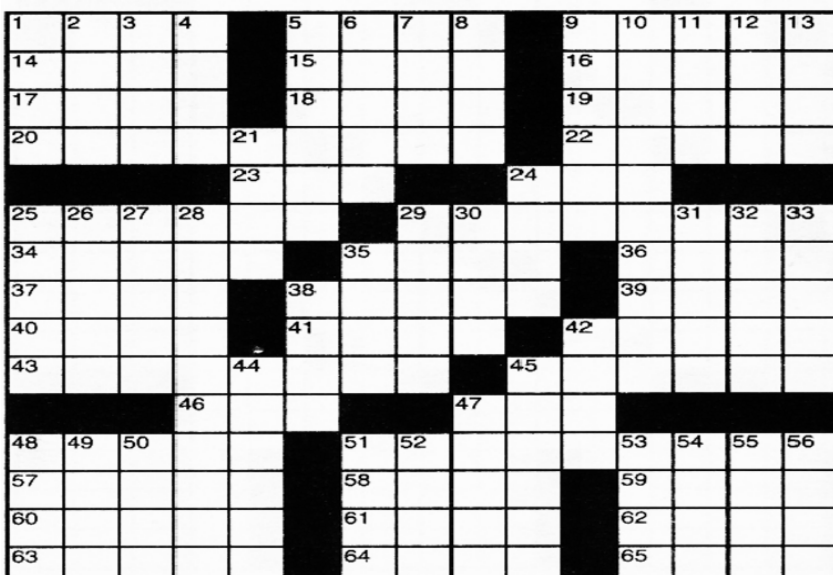
1. Audio reflection
5. "Titanic" star Winslet
9. Bug-hitting-a-windshield sound
14. Loose soil
15. Holly
16. Clio's sister
17. Italian statesman Moro
18. Clusters of sporangia
19. Shrouded in hoarfrost
20. Hearts or spades, in bridge
22. Rectify
23. Mack or Danson
24. Vane indication
25. Abashed
29. Appropriates
34. Grandmas, to

35. some Mt.'s height
36. Hurler Hersher
37. High; prefix
38. Like "me and my shadow"
39. Chilean wine
40. Dingle
41. Rudolph of "Bridesmaids"
42. Stephen Vincent or William Rose
43. Sittings
45. Headgear
46. Litigate
47. Salon substance
48. Pong company
51. Fruit from a West Indian tree
57. Actor Richard et al.
58. "Eyeless in ..." (Milton)
59. Like a desert

60. Actress-writer Taylor
61. Shipper's allowance
62. Gold Coast capital
63. Playwright Clifford
64. Holding a grudge
65. Neighbor of Saudi Arabia

DOWN

1. Character actor Jack
2. Pepsi, e.g.
3. Pilgrimage to Mecca
4. "A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas"
5. "Then He Me" (Crystals hit)
6. How a bedtime story is read
7. Garr of "Mr. Mom"
8. Doorway out
9. Cool, calm, and collected
10. Driving force
11. Hamstrung
12. Solar deity
13. Director Solondz ("Story-telling")
21. Numbered rds.
24. Firm
25. Hosiery run starters
26. Actress Berry
27. Chips in
28. Novel set in Gopher Prairie
29. Stratagems
30. Former WWF wrestler Mero (a.k.a. Sable)
31. Singer-songwriter John
32. Axiom
33. Coin openings
35. Flair
38. Chinese island
42. Gym coach Karolyi
44. Spring blooms
45. Lambaste
47. Crystal-ball user
48. Field: prefix
49. ___ off (irate)
50. Drury Lane Theatre composer
51. Drill instructors: abbr.
52. Luau chow
53. ___ Alto, California
54. High-schooler's formal
55. Flat bean
56. "East of ___"



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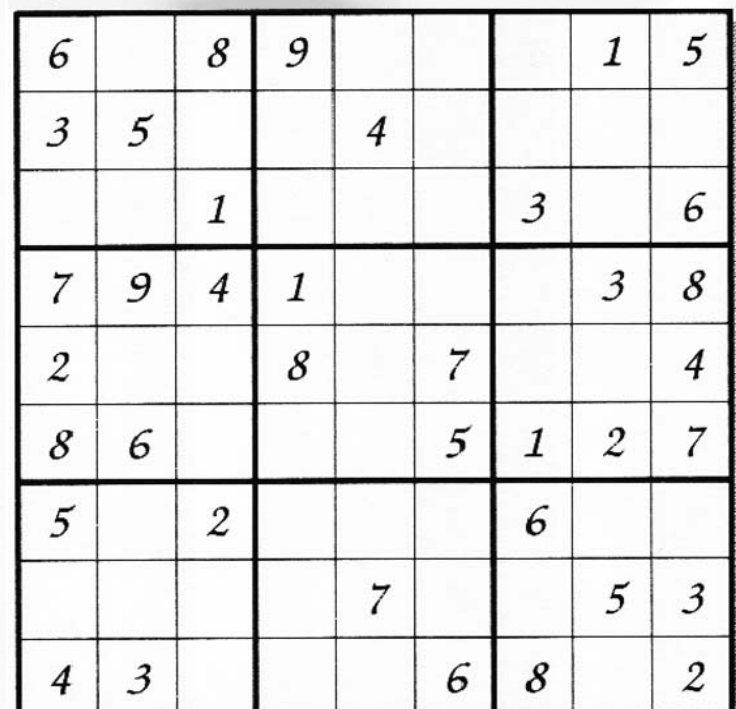
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5	3	6	2	4	9	8	7	1
1	6	9	4	8	7	2	5	3
2	7	1	5	6	4	9	8	3
4	9	6	2	8	5	1	7	3
8	5	3	7	9	1	4	6	2
9	4	5	8	3	2	7	1	6
6	8	2	1	4	9	7	5	3
3	1	7	6	8	3	9	4	5

Complete the grid so that every row and every column contains the numbers 1 through 9
A number is Never repeated in a row or column.
In addition every rectangle must contain the numbers 1 through 9

Finance

Oil prices slip in pre-holiday deals

LONDON (AFP) - Oil slid Thursday, erasing earlier gains in thin pre-holiday trade, as traders tracked the strong dollar and awaited fresh inventories data in top consumer the United States.

New York's main contract light sweet crude for February delivery, known as West Texas Intermediate (WTI), fell 64 cents to \$98.72 a barrel.

Brent North Sea crude for February dipped 64 cents to \$106.92 in late afternoon London trade.

The European single currency slumped on Thursday to the lowest dollar level in more than one year, as Italy's latest bond auction reignited fears over the eurozone crisis in volatile low-volume deals.

Just after midday, the euro tumbled to \$1.2858 -- the lowest level since September 14, 2010. The unit also sank against the safe-haven Japanese yen, striking 100.06 yen -- which was last seen in June 2001.

Traders keep a keen eye on the strong greenback, which makes dollar-priced crude more expensive for buyers using weaker currencies, like the euro. This tends to dampen oil demand and prices.

VTB Capital analyst Andrey Kryuchukov said that the oil market was "still trading off the broader market and against the dollar."

He added that crude futures were "under pressure from a softer dollar in thin pre-holiday trading also after a disappointing auction for Italy's long term debt."

Crude futures had risen in earlier deals on Thursday as worries over crude producer Iran were offset by concerns over the impact of the eurozone debt crisis in the wake of Italy's latest debt auction.

The US Department of Energy meanwhile is set to publish its latest inventories data for the week ending December 23. The weekly report was due one day later than normal

owing to the Christmas holidays.

The United States is the world's largest oil consumer and a gain in its inventories would imply a slowdown in its energy consumption, which would drive oil prices down.

Prices were meanwhile tempered by Wednesday's weekly report from the American Petroleum Institute (API), which showed a spike in US stockpiles instead of an expected drawdown, analysts said.

API statistics showed a 9.6 million barrel gain in US stockpiles last week while analysts had predicted a 1.9-2.3 million barrel fall.

The row between Iran and the US continued Thursday as Washington warned Tehran not to close the Strait of Hormuz -- the world's most important oil transit channel -- after Tehran's Iran's navy chief said it would be "really easy" to do so.

The strait is a strategic choke point linking the Gulf's petroleum-exporting states to the Indian Ocean.

Euro slumps, shares rise after Italy bond auction

LONDON (AFP) - The euro slumped Thursday to the lowest dollar level in more than a year after Italy scraped through a bond auction, but stock markets took it in their stride and advanced on reassuring US jobs data.

In afternoon trade, the European single currency tumbled to \$1.2858 -- the lowest level since September 14, 2010 -- before pushing back to \$1.2917 at close in London, down from \$1.234 on Wednesday.

The unit also sank against the safe-haven Japanese yen, striking 100.06 yen -- last seen in June 2001 -- before bouncing back to 100.40 yen, down from 100.80 yen on Wednesday.

The dollar fell to 77.73 yen

from 77.90 yen on Wednesday.

On the stock markets, traders set the bond auction aside and shares gained in low trading volumes, taking reassurance from weekly jobs numbers in the US.

At close, London's FTSE-100 finished up 1.08 percent at 5,566.77 points. In Paris the CAC-40 jumped 1.84 percent to 3,127.56 points while in Frankfurt the DAX 30 gained 1.34 percent to 5,848.78 points.

Italian stocks were weighed down for much of the day, but closed the session 0.76 percent higher.

US stocks gained in midday trade Thursday helped by a weekly jobless claims number that confirmed the improving trend in the labor market.

In midday trade, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 0.72 percent at 12,238.94 points. The broader S&P 500

0.74 percent to 1,258.89 points, while the Nasdaq Composite gained 0.56 percent to 2,604.45 points

Italy scraped through a key bond auction test on Thursday at the end of a disastrous year for the eurozone, raising 7.0 billion euros (\$9.0 billion).

That was below the maximum sought of 8.5 billion euros but long-term rates holding below the danger threshold of 7.0 percent which has set off alarm bells around the world.

The rate on bonds due in 2021 was at 6.7 percent -- higher than the level of 5.77 percent for the last similar operation on October 13. The rate on bonds due in 2022, however, was 6.98 percent compared to 7.56 percent in November.

In Asia on Thursday, Hong Kong dropped 0.65 percent, Sydney stocks fell 0.43 percent and Tokyo shed 0.29 percent.

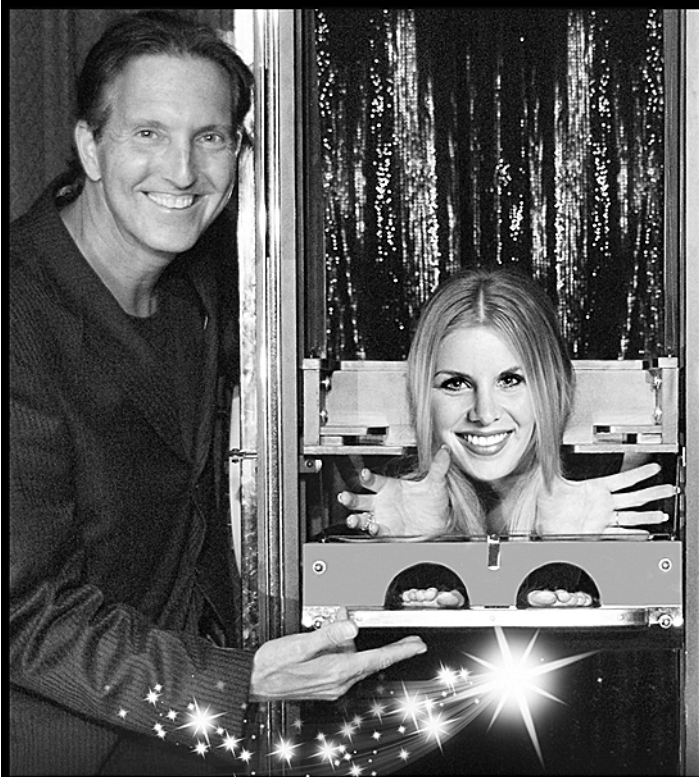


Current as of: 12/29/2011	Currency Code	Buying rate banknotes	Buying Cheques	Selling Rate
U.S.A.	USD	1.77	1.78	1.80
Dutch Antilles	ANG	0.98	1.00	1.002
Canada	CAD	1.700	1.720	1.740
Britain	GBP	2.690	2.740	2.800
Switzerland	CHF	187.70	188.42	189.22
Netherlands	EUR	229.32	231.41	233.74
Sweden	SEK	24.48	25.20	26.00
Denmark	DKK	30.17	30.89	31.69
Norway	NOK	28.83	29.55	30.35
Japan	JPY	226.06	228.13	230.42

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2012

Metallica singer throws stones at lensmen in Uruguay



MONTEVIDEO (AFP) - Metallica lead singer James Hetfield hurled stones at reporters who were photographing him in an ice-cream parlor at a chic Uruguayan resort, the El Pais daily reported Thursday.

The singer for the hugely popular American heavy metal band was cruising with his son on a scooter Sunday in Jose Ignacio when photographers spotted him and followed him to the shop, the paper said.

"When Hetfield saw the photographers outside, he walked down the stairs to the street, grabbed stones and hurled them at the reporters,"

Gaston Renis, a photographer for the magazine Hola, told El Pais.

"The guy was having an ice cream. He was not in an awkward situation to react in such a manner. There were even some passersby saluting him as they recognized him right away," Renis added.

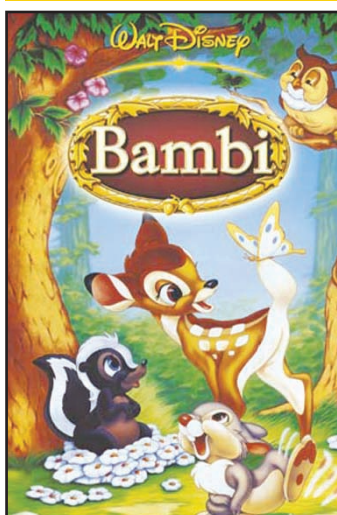
The paper said the incident caused only a few dents on the car of a photographer, who lodged a complaint with police.

Hetfield has for years spent his holidays in the region with his Argentine wife and his children.

Jose Ignacio, located on Uruguay's southern Atlantic coast 180 kilometers (112 miles) east of Montevideo, is a favorite summer haunt for celebrities and jet-setters from around the world.

Metallica was formed in California in 1981, when drummer Lars Ulrich posted an advertisement in a local newspaper, and went on to be one of the biggest rock metal acts in history, selling more than 100 million records worldwide.

'Bambi', 'Forrest Gump' join Library of Congress film trove



LOS ANGELES (AFP) - Bambi is about to rub shoulders with Hannibal Lecter, while "The Kid" will get acquainted with Forrest Gump, at the Library of Congress in Washington.

The four crowd-pleasing motion pictures are among 25

celluloid gems being added this year to the National Film Registry at the de facto national library of the United States.

"These films are selected because of their enduring significance to American culture," chief librarian James Billington said yesterday in a statement.

"Our film heritage must be protected because these cinematic treasures document our history and culture and reflect our hopes and dreams."

The Library of Congress -- the world's biggest in terms of books in its collection -- tops up the National Film Registry annually.

This year's picks span nine decades, from the silent "The Cry of the Children" and "A Cure for Pokeritis" from 1912 to "The Silence of the Lambs" from 1991 and "Forrest

Gump" starring Tom Hanks from 1994.

Also making the list are Charlie Chaplin's first full-length feature "The Kid" from 1921 and Walt Disney's animated "Bambi" from 1942, which the library saluted for "its eloquent message of nature conservation."

Among the others: John Ford's epic Western "The Iron Horse" from 1924, gritty crime drama "The Big Heat" from 1953, feminist documentary "Growing Up Female" from 1971, and festival indie favorite "El Mariachi" from 1992.

There's also a one-minute film from 1972 that foretold the possibilities of 3D movies: "A Computer Animated Hand" by Ed Catmull, a college student who went on to co-found the Pixar Animation Studios.



15 MINUTE ENGLISH
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Gold Coast Aruba: Great savings for large families on holiday rentals



Aruba's newest and most innovative gated community has enjoyed steady sales since breaking ground, as many are finding the secure surroundings and outstanding amenities are just what they were looking for before considering purchasing property on the island. Some owners are using the villas or town homes as vacation retreats rather than full time and are taking advantage of Gold Coast's rental services to turn their investment into ready income.

"The greater portion of home owners are using their 'home away from home' in Aruba to escape the winter months, or spend holidays with the family on the island," noted Gold Coast developer Fito Croes. To assist in the demand for more complete facilities for groups and families, famed hotelier Ed Ma-lone has been placed in charge of the rental program.

Staying at Gold Coast is a very attractive proposition for those traveling with groups that would require multiple hotel rooms. Two and three bedroom Villas or Town Homes accommodate large numbers and offer extensive amenities along with a final cost resulting in considerable savings. The community is minutes to the best beaches and all the casino action, and offers a quiet and secluded getaway with two swimming pools and specialized services with more on the way, such as a fitness room, tennis courts and mini-mall. Ed can arrange maid service, babysitters, caterers,

airline pick-up and drop-off; they even boast a shopping service to stock your shelves before arrival.

Gold Coast accommodations are elegant and spacious, offering privacy for

high-speed fiber-optic Internet connection, individual washer/dryer, and are fully air-conditioned. Cribs, high chairs and hair dryers are available for a modest fee. Concierge services to arrange



parents or a few couples. Beautifully appointed kitchens and bathrooms grace each abode; barbecues and lounges are provided for friendly cookouts and truly savoring the island life. All homes come with cable TV,

rental cars, spa appointments, activities and restaurant reservations are all part of the package.

Check-in for your holiday escape is conducted in the comfort of your vacation home, not while waiting on line at check-in desk. In every way, Gold Coast seeks to pamper their guests while providing them with the feeling of being in a cozy community, not the normally bustling resort, particularly experienced during the major holidays. If you wish an optimal vacation experience with great savings, visit their website: www.goldcoast-aruba.com to get acquainted with the community and the layout, details and availability of accommodations, or call 586-2200 to talk personally to a Gold Coast representative.



Adorable and affordable; 5 Burgers Aruba offers an island twist to the great American Burger

Expatriates residing on Aruba, Aaron and Rosie Walisever are living their dream: a home on paradise while welcoming all and sundry to their proud undertaking, 5 Burgers Aruba. Some may be quite well acquainted with a nationally known U.S. franchise bearing the name "5", and patrons can expect the same great quality between the buns, but an expanded menu and Rosie and Aaron's fanatical dedication to giving their customers what



Rosie and Aaron love their burger too



Gouda Burger 2

made from hand-cut fresh Idaho potatoes, is enough to be shared by two. He was very amused to watch a famous French chef demonstrating the best way to make fried potatoes on a gourmet cooking show and could only comment "He stole my recipe!" Try them the English way-with vinegar, and you'll wonder how you ever ate fries without it. This same 5-star chef also swears by Gouda as the best topping for the ideal gourmet cheeseburger.

they really want has resulted in a unique menu.

"You never get a second chance to make a first impression," comments Aaron; and upon entering 5 Burgers Aruba in The Village Mall in Palm Beach, one is struck by utterly spotless surroundings and a smiling, friendly, attentive service crew. Of course, the main item on the menu is burgers-the way they were meant to be, thick and juicy, made fresh daily and 100% pure beef, the kind that made the hamburger a traditional American treat.

Prices vary only slightly between regular and small (basically 2 patties or 1) with specialty items such as Gouda Burger, Farmer's Burger, Man Burger (almost 12 ounces of choice beef), and a Western Burger with crispy onion rings and BBQ sauce. All of these can be personalized with an incredible array of toppings, (mushrooms, jalapeño peppers, bacon, cheese, lettuce, tomato... whatever the list goes on) at absolutely no extra cost.

5 Burger portions are ENORMOUS! Aaron suggests that even their small serving of fries, which are

If you are a fan of crispy friend onion rings, as we are at THE MORNING NEWS, you cannot leave there without trying their secret recipe battered gourmet rings, made from fresh, not frozen onions. Unquestionably, the best we have had anywhere, and for those that like a little spice, the fried jalapeños are a real treat. Aaron and Rosie have expanded their menu to accommodate certain tastes and dietary needs; they offer a tasty grilled chicken sandwich as well.

5 Burgers Aruba is open for lunch & dinner - daily hours are Noon to 10-ish; delivery is available to both the high-rise and low-rise hotel and beach district for orders over \$50. Enjoy a great lunch without ever leaving the beach by calling 586-3904. However, we suggest you stop by and enjoy their authentic, heartfelt hospitality; it is not unusual for either owner or Manager Marc Anthony when things are not too busy, to sit and chat while sharing their knowledge of the island. Totally yummy and fun plus a great deal for a quality burger, they are definitely worth a visit

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 3. Send an e-mail to themorningnewsaruba@aol.com to inform the office of your user name and contact info: real name, address, & phone number, and receive 1 raffle ticket
 4. Like us on Facebook, and receive a second raffle ticket
 5. Raffle tickets are for final drawing on Ash Wednesday 2012;
 6. **Grand Prize:**
Airfare for two to Bonaire with Tiara Airlines and other fabulous prizes
- Holiday Spirit Contest: *Subscribe to submit***
1. Send us your favorite holiday pix via e-mail
 2. "Picks of the day and week" will appear in THE MORNING NEWS
 3. Contest begins today, Tuesday, December 20 and deadline for submissions is Wednesday, January 4, 2012 at 6:00 PM. No submissions will be accepted after.
 4. Judging is final; winners will be announced on Friday, January 6, 2012
 5. Each submission earns a raffle ticket towards the Ash Wednesday drawing

Prizes for the "Share Your Spirit" Contest:

- Grand Prize:** 3 days/2 nights stay at Boardwalk Apartments
2nd Prize: Trip for two on Mi Dushi Sailboat
3rd Prize: Complete Play package at Cool Casino

Prize winners will receive additional raffle tickets towards final drawing, and a special surprise for the grand prize winning photo.

No purchase necessary to participate; subscription to THE MORNING NEWS and submission of photos are free; photos will only be used for Christmas promotion and owners retain all rights.

We are doing it again for Carnival! New photos-new prizes!

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SPORTS

League works to get outdoor rink in shape

PHILADELPHIA (AFP) - NHL officials and technicians were racing to perfect the outdoor ice that will host the Winter Classic on January 2 despite difficulties posed by rain and wind.

Dan Craig, NHL Senior Director of Facilities Operations, said rain on Tuesday had set back work on the ice sheet, and crews spent several hours on Wednesday morning spraying water on the main and auxiliary rinks at Citizens Bank

Park, more usually the home of baseball's Philadelphia Phillies.

"We were fine until about 6:45 (Tuesday night) and that last little squall came through -- and it wasn't little at all -- it dumped a ton of water on us," Craig said. "Basically it was overloaded on the one side of the rink and it kind of ate through. Nothing you could do about it."

Craig said workers froze several sheets of long white

mesh into the surface at each end of the rink, which will help keep the surface level.

"This floor, it being on a temporary surface, is a floating floor, one on top of the other, and that area where we put the mesh in is where the Zamboni turns," Craig said. "We want to strengthen that area up. This mesh is what we use for the logos and we found that is a very strong element that we can make sure everything stays tight in that area."

Still to go, painting the ice white, then sealing in the paint job. Then lines and logos will be painted by Thursday, with another half inch of ice then added on top.

The Philadelphia Flyers will play host to the New York Rangers on Monday in the fifth installment of the Classic, the outdoor game conceived as a nod to ice hockey's roots.

Last year's Classic between Washington and Pittsburgh was the most-watched NHL telecast in the United States in 36 years with 4.5 million viewers.

Veteran Spurs rout continued from page 16

The Spurs, long a Western Conference force, won 61 games last season but were surprised in the first round of the playoffs by a young, energetic Memphis team, sparking predictions that the team led by 35-year-old Duncan and featuring 34-year-old Ginobili and 29-year-old Parker had passed their prime.

In their first two games of this lockout-shortened season, however, the Spurs have now beaten both Memphis and the Clippers.

San Antonio led by as many as 12 points before Griffin capped a Clippers surge by soaring for a basket that knotted the score at 52-52 late in the second quarter.

A Ginobili three-pointer

saw the Spurs take a 58-54 lead at halftime, and San Antonio took firm control in the third period, when they outscored Los Angeles by 21 points to take a 96-71 lead.

The comfortable victory meant Popovich was able to give his stars some rest. Duncan played 25 minutes, Parker 26 and Ginobili 27.

"You wouldn't trade it," Popovich said of the luxury of resting his veterans for significant minutes. It could prove especially important in the hectic, lockout-shortened season. The Spurs were due back in action on Thursday night at Houston.

"It was a good night for us, and to get some rest was surely welcome," Popovich said.

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All Liverpool need is a goal - Dalglish

LIVERPOOL (AFP) - Liverpool manager Kenny Dalglish believes there's nothing wrong with his side that a few more goals won't solve.

The Reds have managed just 21 goals in 18 Premier League matches so far this season and have drawn (seven) nearly as many matches as they have won (eight).

Their plight was summed up when even bottom of the table Blackburn Rovers managed a 1-1 draw at Anfield on Boxing Day in a match Liverpool dominated.

Striker Andy Carroll, signed for £35 million in January, was in the spotlight again after missing a host of chances against Blackburn and the forward, who has managed just four goals for Liverpool, is bound to be in the spotlight again when the Merseysiders face his former club Newcastle at Anfield today.

Despite all their dropped points, Liverpool are still only one win away from fourth-placed Chelsea but Anfield is no longer as intimidating as it was in Dalglish's heyday and in Demba Ba, Carroll's replacement, Newcastle have an in-form striker.

The Senegal international, set to leave on African Nations Cup duty next month, took his goal tally for the season to 14 in the 2-0 win over Bolton on Boxing Day which ended Newcastle's six-game wait for a league win following an impressive start to the campaign.

Newcastle manager Alan Pardew, who began his reign as Magpies boss with a 3-1 win at home to Liverpool -- a match in which Carroll scored for the north-east side -- just over a year ago, has been delighted by Ba.

"He's just one of those players who has everything, really, as a striker," said Pardew, whose side are just a point behind Liverpool.

"There's not much to his game that he hasn't got, and that stands you in good stead," he added. "When any chance comes your way, you are going to have a good armoury to get a goal."

Ajax fan sentenced for attack on goalkeeper

THE HAGUE (AFP) - A Dutch court has sentenced an Ajax fan to six months in jail after he ran onto the pitch during a Dutch Cup match and tried to assault an opposition goalkeeper, a report said on Thursday.

An Amsterdam court convicted the 19-year-old, only identified as "Wesley van W." of premeditated attempted assault after he tried to attack AZ Alkmaar 'keeper Esteban Alvarado last week, Dutch public television NOS reported.

He will serve four months of the six-month sentence, with the remaining two months suspended for two years, the report added.

Television footage of the December 21 incident showed Wesley van W. running onto the field during the last-16 tie and trying to tackle Alvarado, who then laid in with a couple of kicks before being pulled away.

This led to the Costa Rican 'keeper being red-carded by the referee and the fan being escorted off by police.

The expulsion infuriated AZ coach Gertjan Verbeek, who led his players off the pitch complaining about the lack of security at Ajax's Amsterdam Arena. The match was subsequently called off in the 37th minute.

The game will now be played behind closed doors and without fans on January 19, the Dutch football federation (KNVB) said this week.



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Unlike Mourinho, Ronaldo sees future at Real

MADRID (AFP) - Portuguese star Cristiano Ronaldo has said he plans to stay at Real Madrid, just days after the club's coach Jose Mourinho announced he would like eventually to return to the English Premier League.

"I'm happy at Real Madrid. I want to remain at the club in the future. I'm enjoying myself and I want to continue having fun at Real Madrid," he told reporters at a sports

conference in Dubai according to the club's website.

Ronaldo joined Real from Manchester United in July 2009 on a six-year contract for a fee of around 94 million euros (\$122m), making him the world's most expensive player.

Madrid are currently top of the Spanish league with 40 points, three more than nearest rivals Barcelona.

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NBA: Veteran Spurs rout Clippers

SAN ANTONIO (AFP) - The San Antonio Spurs, not quite ready to be written off as too old and too slow to claim an NBA crown, routed the Los Angeles Clippers 115-90 Wednesday.

Manu Ginobili scored 24

points, leading six Spurs players who scored in double figures.

DeJuan Blair added 20 and Richard Jefferson chipped in 19. Tony Parker scored 14 points with nine assists, Tim Duncan scored 10 with eight

rebounds and James Anderson added 12 off the bench as the Spurs shot 56.3 percent from the field.

The Spurs also made all 15 of their free throws, but coach Gregg Popovich said defense was the real key to the victory.

"Shots went in tonight," Popovich said. "That's what happens. Some nights they don't drop. Tonight the best part of our game was defense."

And that's what was lacking for the Clippers, coach Vinny Del Negro said.

"Give San Antonio credit - they were cutting hard, they were moving the basketball, we were very stagnant," he said. "We weren't physical. We weren't contesting shots..."

"We played terrible, just from start to finish tonight," Del Negro said. "We had a little glimpse in the second quarter, I thought we did some good things. But they jumped on us in the third and we were just chasing them the rest of the game."

The Clippers have been touted as a potential new power in the Western Conference after the arrival of All-Star point guard Chris Paul to team with Blake Griffin, the explosive talent who earned



Manu Ginobili scored 24 points, leading six Spurs players who scored in double figures.

Rookie of the Year honors last season.

Griffin led the Clippers with 28 points, while Paul scored 10 on 3-of-10 shooting.

continues on page 14

Best wishes for 2012

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